



# COVID-19 SAFE PLAN

*Continuity Management Phase of the COVID-19 pandemic-Updated May 2021*

Our Covid Safe plan has been developed in conjunction with the current health advice and announcements made from Public Health Victoria and Department of Early childhood education alongside the COVID-19 updates. This plan helps to protect educators, parents, families and visitors and helps us prepare our service in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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**SERVICES MUST CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER WITH EDUCATORS TO ADAPT AND PROMOTE SAFE WORK PRACTICES, CONSISTENT WITH ADVICE FROM HEALTH AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THE WORKPLACE CAN IMPLEMENT PHYSICAL DISTANCING MEASURES FOR ADULTS AND EXEMPLARY HYGIENE MEASURES TO ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ALL EDUCATORS.**

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Additionally, the Service must be prepared for the possibility of cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be able to respond immediately, appropriately and efficiently, and consistently with advice from health authorities and the regulatory authority. (*SafeWork Australia*)

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## RISK ASSESSMENT



We have undertaken a thorough risk assessment in consultation with educators and identified possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices. All our educators have also completed the Infection Control Training.

Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised all risks as is reasonably practicable. We will continue to review control measures and address those risks. We have kept all educators and families informed on the changing risks at our workplace and the control measures being implemented to minimise these risks.

We have identified children and adults with compromised immunity or complex health care needs.

### EDUCATORS PRE-SCREENING

- Educators have completed a health declaration indicating they have not:
  - returned from a state or territory where border measures are in place and self-isolation orders are imposed
  - have not been in close contact with anyone who has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis
- Educators will have their temperature scanned at the doorway before entering the service using the Thermal Scanner.
- If an educator registers a temperature above **37.5°C** and this is related to an illness they are not able to remain in the workplace [Victoria Health suggest anyone with a temperature above 37.5°C should be tested for COVID-19]
- If an educator is feeling unwell and has cold or flu symptoms, (persistent cough, difficulty breathing, fever) they are not permitted to attend work
- We encourage all educators to be tested for COVID-19 if they have any cold or flu like symptoms

### EDUCATOR ARRIVAL AND ON-SHIFT PROTOCOLS

- Educator travelling to work
  - travelling in their own car is preferable while we do understand this may not always be possible.
  - if using public transport, adhere to social distancing measures at all times and are required to wear face masks
- are requested to wash uniform/clothes frequently.
- must maintain strict personal hygiene measures- hand washing, showering, physical distancing from others in public
- must use hand sanitizers before entering the service and must wash hands thoroughly upon arriving at their rooms with soap and water

- rosters are staggered for start, finish and break times to reduce number of adults gathered together
- clean and disinfect objects that are touched often- mobile phones, keys, wallets, etc
- use alcohol-based hand sanitisers if soap and water are not available
- limit adult groupings/interactions where possible
- as so far as reasonably practicable, ensure educators maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres between each adult in the service
- times for educators to utilise educators only facilities are staggered - e.g.: lunchroom, kitchen area, office

## PARENT PRE-SCREENING

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- parents are required to inform if they have
  - been tested for Covid-19 and provide the service with the results
  - been in close contact with a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or has been directed to self-isolate
- families are permitted to enter the service after getting their temperature scanned at the doorway with the thermal scanner. as arranged by the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor.

## CHILDREN PRE-SCREENING

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- families are requested to complete temperature self-checks with the thermal scanner of their child upon arrival
  - a child with a temperature higher than 37.5°C will not be permitted entry to care where this is related to an illness
  - if a child's temperature is above 37.5°C, families aren't permitted to bring them into the service.
  - If a family chooses to bring in their child inside the centre despite the thermal scanner showing their child has a temperature, this will be held as a breach of the centre's Covid-safe plan and the nominated supervisor will need to discuss this matter seriously with the family.

## PARENT / CHILDREN ARRIVAL AND SIGN-IN PROTOCOLS

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- Not more than 2 families are encouraged to use the lift at a time
- Families are required to wear masks during drop-off/pick up.
- Parents are encouraged not to have long communication/interaction with other families, educators or other adults (and use alternative methods of communication such as phone, Educa app, email)
- consideration is given to families for whom English is their second language and written information translated
- consideration is made to avoid families queuing in car park and causing traffic congestion
- families wipe down iPad with disinfectant wipes after sign in/out on Kiosk.
- a separate area is provided if families are required to complete additional paperwork- e.g. parent and child health declaration forms, updating medication requirements for children
- if families require additional assistance with multiple children, educators may be required to assist
- families who are front line workers (doctors, nurses) are requested to have changed from their work uniform after completing their shift before collecting their child
- if families require face to face communication ensure physical distancing measures are implemented and limit the time of the interaction/discussion where possible

## VISITOR / TRADESMAN ARRIVAL PROTOCOLS

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- visitors to the Service reduced to an absolute minimum
- volunteers are allowed based on centre's student and volunteer policy
- vulnerable or high-risk people excluded where practical, including the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions
- deliveries are regularly reviewed, and drop-off organised at a predetermined point outside the service
- delivery drivers requested to call ahead to notify the delivery time
- only a minimum number of educators are designated to receive deliveries to reduce risks
- electronic paperwork/ e-invoicing used where possible
- minimise interaction and alternatives to signatures of deliveries received- contactless methods or use own pen
- alcohol-based hand sanitiser used before and after receiving any packages/deliveries
- contractors who require entry to the service adhere to hygiene procedures
- clear guidelines provided to contractors when visiting the service regarding physical distancing, hygiene protocols and child protection
- handwashing facilities are provided to contractors to ensure they wash their hands thoroughly upon arrival, wipe any equipment with disinfectant wipes

## EXCLUSION GUIDELINES



Any educator, child or visitor to the service who presents with any of the following, will be excluded from the service. Any person who:

- has a temperature over 37.5° C
- presents as 'unwell' –unexplained or persistent cough, drowsy or unresponsive, shortness of breath, respiratory illness, runny nose, suffering with diarrhea or vomiting, has a persistent headache
- has recently travelled overseas or interstate where self-isolation measures are in place
- has been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- has been requested to self-isolate

### **IF AN EDUCATOR OR CHILD TESTS POSITIVE TO COVID-19!**

#### **PROCEDURE FOR A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 IN OUR SERVICE**

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In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the *Public Health Unit (PHU)* will conduct contact tracing to identify other people and places the person may have had contact with. The PHU will consider each unique context and provide specific requirements for the Approved Provider/Director to follow.

If a possible contact is from an Early Childhood Education and Care Service, the PHU will contact the Approved Provider and provide support and guidelines of the required procedures that will need to be explicitly followed. These may include advice and rules for continued operation, deep environmental cleaning and/or potential closure. No personal information will be shared with the Approved Provider as per Privacy laws.

The service will be provided with information about what day the person would have been in the Service, the time frame and the age of the child if applicable.

Should a parent contact the service directly to report that their child or a parent has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the Approved Provider must contact the PHU immediately. In order to comply with privacy laws, health information should only be shared by employers on a 'need-to-know' basis. This may be due to assist in identifying close contacts within the Service. The PHU will provide advice and action.

### **THE PHU WILL:**

- investigate all persons who receive a confirmed COVID-19 test result
- determine time frames of contamination and identify all possible places and people where cross contamination could have occurred
- conduct detailed contact tracing to identify any people who could have been in contact with the person and determine if this was 'close contact' or 'casual contact'
- provide information on the time period where the person would most likely have been contagious
- adhere to privacy and confidentiality laws and not identify the person who has been diagnosed with the virus
- request information of all persons who would have been in the workplace (service) during this period
- determine the next steps for action which could include:
  - closure of one room/area
  - short term closure of the entire service
  - notification to your state or territory regulatory authority, DESE and via your third party software provider or via Operational Details in the [PEP](#) (effective 24 July DESE)
  - the requirement of a deep clean of the service (Infection Protection Team will assist)
  - COVID-19 testing of employees, children and parents
  - self-isolation periods of 14 days will be required
  - expected date of return to service

### **RETURN TO STAGE 3 or HIGHER 'STAY AT HOME' RESTRICTIONS or FORCED SERVICE CLOSURE**

Advice from the Chief Health Officer in each state/territory will provide notification about any *Stay at Home* restrictions due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

The AHPPC will provide advice if early education and care services can continue to operate with appropriate risk-mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by the Public Health Unit to close).



## HYGIENE AND PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES

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- all educators have completed [COVI19 infection control training](#)
- the cap on the number of visitors entering the service has now been lifted on health advice but we request all families to please be vigilant and only one parent to do drop off and pick up until further notice. For families with multiple children, both parents may attend the centre for drop off/pick up.
- Families are not to be accompanied by other visitors. Visitors can wait downstairs in the lobby area.
- anyone who is sick may not enter the service
- if a child or educator becomes ill whilst at the service, they will be sent home as soon as possible (As a precaution, they will be separated from other children whilst waiting to be collected to help prevent the spread of a virus)
- we have enhanced hygiene practices for all educators children and visitors - washing hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- health and hygiene signs and posters are displayed to remind all educators and visitors of the measures necessary to help stop the spread of the virus- hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette
- tissues are disposed of in closed bins and followed by washing hands
- promotion of the annual influenza vaccination for educators, children and their families
- facilitation of robust infection control and cleaning
- reminders to refrain from intentional physical contact- shaking hands, kissing on cheeks, hugging
- the service has adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and additional hygiene supplies including:
  - soap
  - contact less hand sanitiser dispensers
  - hand sanitiser
  - toilet paper
  - paper hand towel
  - tissues
  - disposable gloves
  - masks (if required)
  - thermometers
  - rubbish bins with lids/bin liners
  - disinfectant wipes
  - cleaning detergent/ disinfectant/ cloths

### *Handwashing*

- we implement strict hand washing procedures for all educators, children and visitors
- all educators have read and acknowledge understanding of the *Hand Washing Policy*
- contactless hand sanitiser dispensers are provided outside the lift downstairs and on the front entry of the service and normal sanitizer dispensers are adequately placed around the workplace
- bathrooms are well stocked with soap, hand wash and paper towel
- posters with clear instructions on how to wash hands and/or use hand sanitiser are displayed
- photos of children demonstrating each step of hand washing near the sinks are displayed as visual prompts
- cough/sneeze etiquette
  - posters demonstrating correct techniques for coughing/sneezing into a flexed elbow are displayed

- educators model correct procedures to children
- attempts by children are positively reinforced
- reminders to wash hands after sneeze, blowing/wiping nose is displayed
- reminders to dispose of used tissues in the bins provided are displayed

### *Physical distancing*

- where possible, we remain conscious of physical distancing requirements in each enclosed space and limit the number of adults in a space at any one time
- educators are reminded to maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres between other adults
- where possible, educators are requested to use other methods of communication with colleagues rather than congregate together
- workstations, desks and tables are spread out
- changes have been made to the workplace layout to allow educators and children to enter and exit rooms minimising risk to their health and safety
- signs are displayed to remind educators and families of how many people can be in an enclosed space at any given time (for example: kitchen, resource room, bathroom, lift)
- Educators will comply to physical distancing requirements when
  - eating lunch
  - discussing children's development
  - gathering resources
  - cleaning

*Children do not have to be counted in implementing physical distancing measures in an Early Childhood Education and Care service. However, it is best practice to limit the size of groups and interactions to educators implement physical distancing measures. (Safe Work Australia May 2020)*

#### **Considerations include:**

- stagger play times for children
- organise small groups for indoor and outdoor learning program
- utilise the outdoor area as much as possible
- rearrange resources in rooms to provide a larger range of small group activities- books in several locations rather than one bookshelf; several stations for paint, playdough, craft
- limit number of chairs at a table
- set up activities at the end of tables
- limit number of adults sitting at tables with children during mealtimes
- maximise the space between children at mealtimes
- consider offering several mealtimes sittings to avoid all children requiring seating at one time
- clean tables and chairs thoroughly between each sitting
- ensure highchairs, cots and bedding are spaced well apart to allow for physical distancing requirements to be managed by educators



### *Food handling and preparation*

- educators have relevant and appropriate training to support safe hygiene practices
- educators maintain physical distancing requirements in food preparation areas
- the kitchen area is only accessed by specific staff during hours of operation
- effective hygiene procedures are increased including-
  - regular handwashing when preparing foods, after going to the bathroom and after touching face or hair
  - cleaning and sanitising food preparation areas and equipment
  - sanitising all eating and drinking utensils and food contact surfaces
- current practices are used regarding provision of reusable utensils
- disposable gloves are used when handling food
- *option - suspend self-serve mealtimes for children- meals will be served by staff only educators only.*

### *Cleaning and disinfecting procedures*

- a combination of cleaning and disinfection is used on a daily basis
- surfaces are cleaned with detergent and water before disinfecting
- adherence to National Health and Medical Research Council (HMRC) childcare cleaning guidelines
- high touch surfaces are cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily or more frequently if required (door handles, light switches, tables, chairs, iPads, tablets, keyboards, touch screens, nappy change tables, puzzles)
- wash and launder toys using the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely
- maintain a cleaning checklist
- every toy and surface cleaned every day. Toys that are mouthed by infants cleaned and disinfected before other infants have access to the toy
- cleaning contractors instructed to hygienically clean the service to ensure risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
- educators wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for cleaning as a precaution
- hands washed with soap and water before and after wearing protective equipment
- gloves disposed of in leak-proof bag
- personal belongings stored in lockers to avoid cross contamination

### *Washroom facilities*

- all washrooms for educators and children have adequate supplies of soap, liquid handwash, paper towels and warm running water
- effective personal hygiene practices are reinforced through posters and fact sheets in prominent positions in the service
- educators model correct handwashing procedures with children
- the number of children and adults using washroom facilities is limited at any one time
- situations where children are required to queue to use bathroom or wash their hands are avoided
- all facilities are cleaned and disinfected effectively
- bins with lids operated by foot pedals are easily accessed in washrooms

## PHYSICAL SPACE REQUIREMENTS

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### *Indoor and outdoor environments*

- where possible, children are separated into smaller groups than normal throughout the service to promote physical distancing for adults
- ventilation within the service is increased by opening windows and doors when weather permits
- a reduction in cross over of educators is controlled where possible
- where possible, children are seated at opposite ends of a table when playing and eating
- use small tables spaced apart rather than groups of tables positioned together for activities and eating
- spots are placed on the floor for children to sit on during group time
- *considerations during transitions between learning experiences - washing hands, collecting hats, drink bottles, resources, using the bathroom- how can these be managed to reduce queuing and the need for several adults to supervise*
- the amount of rubbish bins is increased so children don't gather in groups
- where practical consider moving some table activities outside
- *option - set up duplicate activities at tables to provide more space between children and adults*
- rotation of groups for indoor and outdoor play environments ensuring educator to child ratios are maintained
- consideration given to limiting numbers of children accessing particular equipment to ensure adequate supervision and adhering to physical distancing for adults as much as possible e.g.: sandpit, climbing equipment
- all outdoor equipment is regularly cleaned and disinfected

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

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- positive interactions and relationships with children and their families are maintained.
- we provide reliable sources of information to share with families during this pandemic
- we use trusted sources of information only
- we use a range of communication methods to ensure all families receive and understand key messages- emails, phone calls, newsletter, digital platform, personal notes, your service's website or Facebook page
- signage around the service for parents and families has been increased providing directions, procedures and reassurance
- phone calls to families to provide information about their child that would normally be done at the end of each day face to face has been increased
- families are kept informed about centre updates via Educa Dashboard message, emails and phone calls.
- information is provided to families about their responsibilities for updating information to Centrelink through myGov
- families who may be eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy-Temporary Financial Hardship are encouraged to contact Centrelink
- support is provided to families to assist in their child's well-being [BeYou Emerging Minds](#)
- remain consciously aware of families and children who may be more vulnerable or at risk due to the COVID-19 environment- see [National Office for Child Safety](#), [eSafety Commissioner](#), [Kids Helpline](#)
- continue connecting with children and families who have not yet returned to early learning through online platforms such as Zoom, Story Park etc or send children a letter each week
- continue to maintain positive relationships with all families to encourage participation with our service
- information provided to children is age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing

## CONTINUITY OF EDUCATORS



- we maintain open communication with educators about continuity of employment opportunities at our workplace
- one-on-one meetings with educators to discuss rosters and availabilities is regular and ongoing
- we have returned to similar rosters and placement of educators in particular rooms to provide continuity of care for children
- staffing rosters meet or exceed educator to child ratios

## COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION WITH EDUCATORS

- regularly consult with educators on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19 on a regular basis by revisiting our Covid-19 Management Plan.
- routinely discuss the current control measures in place to eliminate or minimise the risk of exposure and review as required
- as enrolment numbers of children increase, control measures are adjusted to manage the change. For instance families are now permitted to enter the child's room and participate in their birthday celebrations within the service but we encourage them to do a quick drop off and pick up. We have now recommenced incursions, but excursions have been put on hold.
- routinely communicate and consult with all educators about any modifications or updates to current policies or procedures that are in place to account for the pandemic conditions – (COVID-19 Safe Management Plan, Arrival and Departure Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Control of Infectious Diseases Policy, Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy, Hand Washing Policy)
- assessment of the adequacy of resources/facilities in the workplace for the welfare of all educators is routinely applied
- we maintain regular consultation with educators about current work, health and safety measures implemented and any changes or additions that may need to be made to ensure the safety for all educators
- Educators are consulted about changes to work rosters, team meetings, training, QIP, etc.
- limitations re-imposed to team meetings in person. Alternative meeting avenue is being considered via zoom.
- non face-to-face methods of communication are encouraged such as emails, Zoom, Skype

## STAFF WELLBEING

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- a conscious effort to maintain strong and supportive relationships with all educators is made (including those on leave)
- up to date information from reliable sources is provided. Including:
  - employment support packages through [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) (DESE)
  - [Safe Work Australia](#) recommendations for Work Health and Safety
  - Department of Health- [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#)
  - Support agencies including counselling services (Beyond Blue, Head Space)
- sensitivity and empathy to the feelings of individual educators is paramount, in particular educators who may be concerned about returning to the workplace
- we offer opportunities for discussions about the support that is available such as Beyond Blue to help cope with trauma and anxiety or through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider our business is associated with (if applicable)
- constant reassurance is provided to staff indicating that we are always working to eliminate or minimise risks to their health and safety in the workplace to help ease their concerns
- immediate response is applied to any workplace bullying by following relevant policies and procedures
- confidentiality and privacy laws are maintained at all times
- we foster wellbeing initiatives as suggested by staff members and professionals within the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector (Mindfulness, Yoga, dance, music)
- all educators take required breaks during the day
- opportunities are provided to educators to engage in online professional development courses and workshops
- time is set aside for programming, mentoring sessions and capacity building

## EDUCATORS RETURNING TO WORK

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- the Approved Provider will meet with educators returning to work to cooperatively plan for transition back to work from leave- long service, sick leave or other leave entitlements
- discussions may include possible changes that have been implemented to keep the workplace safe, healthy and free of coronavirus
- educators will be required to revise any policies and procedures that have been amended due to COVID-19 such as
  - Health and Safety Policy, Arrival and Departure Policy, Hand Washing Policy, Sick Child Policy
- educators pre-screening protocols will apply (health declaration, temperature check)
- transition back to work for educators may include
  - staggering start and finish times
  - change in work hours/rosters
  - scheduling of breaks to avoid crowding

## STAFF TRAINING

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- options for the delivery of refresher training for First Aid and CPR through the [Australian Skills Quality Authority](#) as recommended by ACECQA is made available
- consideration given for completing theoretical aspects of training by individual staff members online
- the range of interactive and online courses offered through professional learning providers is consistently investigated (webinars, e-learning modules)
- consideration given on offering professional learning time for educators to complete modules at home

- we encourage and support educators to gain professional learning hours towards teacher accreditation requirements relevant to each state and territory requirements

## VULNERABLE EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN

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- children and educators with compromised immunity or complex health care needs are identified
- we request educators with underlying health conditions to seek medical advice from their health practitioner regarding additional measures required to protect themselves whilst at work (PPE, additional handwashing, less contact with infants or younger children requiring nappy changing)
- any revision to guidelines from the AHPPC are followed – ([6 July 2020 update](#))
- educators who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 may include:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical condition
  - people aged 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
  - people with compromised immune systems
- families have been requested to update their child's medical management, risk minimisation and communication plans in consultation with their child's health practitioner- including Asthma Management Plans
- all educators and children are encouraged to have the annual influenza vaccine if there are no contraindications to do so. (this is not a requirement under a Public Health Order, just a recommendation from the AHPPC)